

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EB-08 DODE-00 NSAE-00
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INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 0126

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, BEXP, MR
SUBJECT: SPANISH PERIODICAL ARTICLE ON US ARMS MERCHANTS IN
NOUAKCHOTT

REF: (A) 77 NOUAKCHOTT 2647, (B) 77 NOUAKCHOTT 2737,
(C) 77 NOUAKCHOTT 2774, (D) 77 STATE 293237

1. SUMMARY: ARTICLE IN DECEMBER 12 ISSUE OF SPANISH PERIODICAL "QUE" ALLEGES THAT US BUSINESSMEN IN NOUAKCHOTT WERE ASSISTED BY US EMBASSY EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING MEMBER OF PEACE CORPS, IN PROMOTING ARMS SALES. ARTICLE, THOUGH REPLETE WITH INACCURATE MISLEADING STATEMENTS, SHOULD BE REVIEWED BY DEPARTMENT OFFICERS WHO MAY BE QUESTIONED ABOUT ALLEGATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN NOVEMBER 1977, SHORTLY FOLLOWING SUCCESSFUL POLISARIO ATTACK ON MAURITANIAN IRON ORE TRAIN, PHOTOGRAPHER ADRIAN WECER ARRIVED IN NOUAKCHOTT AND CONTACTED EMBASSY IN EFFORTS TO OBTAIN MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT (GIRM) ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING PHOTOGRAPHS OF BATTLE SCENE. WECER TRAVELED ON US TOURIST PASSPORT AND STATED HE WAS EMPLOYEE OF KAPPA NEWS AGENCY IN MADRID ON PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSIGNMENT FOR WASHINGTON POST/NEWSWEEK. EMBOFF ADVISED WECER OF RISKS INVOLVED IN TRAVEL TO NORTHERN

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REGION OF MAURITANIA DUE TO UNSTABLE MILITARY SITUATION AND STATED US POLICY WAS TO DISCOURAGE ALL US CITIZENS FROM TRAVEL TO NORTH. IN ADDITION, SINCE WECER HAD TEMPORARILY "MISPLACED" PRESS CREDENTIALS FROM KAPPA NEWS AGENCY IN MADRID. EMBOFF ASKED FOR VERIFICATION OF ASSIGNMENT. FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF MADRID TELEX ASSERTING WECER WAS ON POST/NEWSWEEK ASSIGNMENT, AND FOLLOWING STANDARD PROCEDURE RECOMMENDED BY GIRM, EMBOFF

INTRODUCED WECER TO SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, AND (SINCE WECER SPEAKS EXTREMELY LIMITED FRENCH) RELAYED HIS REQUEST TO VISIT BATTLE SITE AND/OR ACCOMPANY MAURITANIAN TROOPS ON MANEUVERS. SECRETARY-GENERAL SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS MATTER WITH MILITRAY AUTHORITIES. SECRETARY-GENERAL DID NOT GRANT APPROVAL, AND WECER COOLED HIS HEELS AT MARHABA HOTEL FOR ONE WEEK BEFORE DEPARTING.

3. THREE US CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES OF GATEWAY INCORPORATED, US EXPORTING FIRM BASED AT DULLES AIRPORT, WERE ALSO STAYING AT MARHABA DURING MONTH OF NOVEMBER. WECER FREQUENTLY ENCOUNTERED GATEWAY REPRESENTATIVES IN LOBBY-BAR, FASHIONED SUBJECT STORY AND TOOK ACCOMPANYING PHOTOGRAPHS AT THAT TIME. (ARTICLE POUCHED AF/W). ARTICLE ALLEGES THAT GATEWAY SUPPLIED MILITARY EQUIPMENT WAS FLOWN INTO NOUAKCHOTT BY A DC-4 WHOSE PILOT DID NOT OBTAIN PROPER CLEARANCE AND WHO ASKED MAURITANIAN OFFICIAL TO CONTACT GATEWAY OFFICIALS AT MARHABA AND NOT US EMBASSY. ARTICLE STATES THAT WHILE EMBASSY OFFICIALS TRY TO DISCOURAGE PRIVATE CITIZENS AND JOURNALISTS FROM TRAVELLING NORTH, THEY DO NOT HESITATE TO INTRODUCE ARMS MERCHANTS TO ARAB CHIEFS. ARTICLE CONTINUES THAT WHEN NEGOTIATIONS ARE DELICATE, EMBASSY OFFICIALS DO NOT INTERVENE, BUT THIS IS DONE IN THEIR PLACE BY EUGENE NEIL, A MEMBER OF THE PEACE CORPS, AN INSTITUTION LINKED WITH THE CIA. ARTICLE QUOTES HEAD GATEWAY REP MALCOLM CHAPMAN AS WILLING TO SELL WECER A NOCTRON IV NIGHT-SCOPE IF PERMISSION COULD BE OBTAINED FROM STATE DEPARTMENT.

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4. GATEWAY REPRESENTATIVE MALCOLM CHAPMAN DID SPEAK WITH EMBOFFS IN SEPTEMBER AND NOVEMBER 1977 AND TWO GATEWAY EMPLOYEES SPENT SEVERAL WEEKS IN NOUAKCHOTT TRAINING MAURITANIANS IN USE PRC-77 RADIOS WHICH GATEWAY SOLD TO MAURITANIANS. AS RE-PORTED REFTELS A & B, EMBOFFS HAD LIMITED CONTACT WITH GATEWAY REPS AND DID NOT ASSIST WITH SALES DISCUSSIONS AT ANY TIME.

5. COMMENT: WECER ARTICLE IS REPLETE WITH INACCURATE MISLEADING STATEMENTS AND MAKES NO EFFORTS TO PRESENT EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT ITS CONTENTIONS. GARY NEILL WAS NOT PEACE CORPS EMPLOYEE BUT EMPLOYEE OF GATEWAY WHO WAS SENT HERE TO TRAIN MAURITANIANS IN USE OF PRC-77 RADIOS. NEILL SAID HE WAS SIMULTANEOUSLY SEEKING EMPLOYMENT WITH PEACE CORPS AND OBTAINED ASSISTANCE FROM PEACE CORPS OFFICE IN PASSING INQUIRIES TO PC WASHINGTON REGARDING STATUS HIS APPLICATION (REFTELS C & D). ARTICLE IS SO LACKING IN FACTUAL CONTENT AND INTEREST THAT REBUTTAL WOULD ONLY PUBLICIZE INCOMPETENT JOURNALISM. HOWEVER THE POTENTIAL FOR ARTICLE SURFACING AN AWKWARD CONTEXT IS OBVIOUSLY THERE (THE MAGAZINE REACHED AMBASSADOR THROUGH THE GERMAN EMBASSY HERE) AND WE FEEL THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE AWARE ITS CONTENTS. WE SUGGEST AF/W ALERT PC/W (CAROLYN PAYTON AND

WILLIAM GAYMON) IMMEDIATELY AND DISCUSS CONTENTS THIS CABLE.

6. FOR MADRID -- WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING COPIES OF ARTICLES WHICH SPECIFICALLY REFER AMEMBASSY NOUCHOTT EMPLOYEES. ALSO INTERESTED KNOWING IF OTHER WECER ARTICLES OR FOLLOW-UP REACTION TO THIS ONE HAVE APPEARED IN SPANISH MEDIA. SPANISH EMBASSY DCM HAS READ ARTICLE AND PLANS TO PROTEST THIS IRRESPONSIBLE JOURNALISM TO EDITORS OF "QUE" DURING HIS MADRID HOME LEAVE LATER THIS MONTH. HE WILL SPECIFICALLY OBJECT TO MISLEADING STATEMENTS CONCERNING MAURITANIA.

7. FOR DEPARTMENT -- WOULD APPRECIATE COMPLETE TRANSLATION AND WELCOME COMMENT AND/OR INSTRUCTIONS.

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